

Senate Judiciary Committee. Judging by his answers to the Committee's questions, he has been doing a lot of reflection lately. He now believes that "the consideration of addiction as a disease has wide application." A man who once defended harsh mandatory minimum sentences today professes support for "second and third chances" and tempering justice with mercy. A harsh partisan critic of President Clinton now wishes to "transcend traditional political and party boundaries." The same person who wrote "[t]here is no question that supply fosters demand" stands beside President Bush's pledge that "[t]he most effective way to reduce the supply of drugs in America is to reduce the demand for drugs in America."

Mr. Walters assured the Committee that he has not undergone what we refer to as a "confirmation conversion." That is precisely what concerns me—that he has not moderated his views at all, but has merely rethought his public relations strategy. Over the course of his career, Mr. Walters has made a conscious choice to polarize rather than advance the public debate. Accordingly, I cannot provide my support for his nomination.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

LIFE AS AN AMERICAN

• Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise today to share with you and the rest of my colleagues the thoughts of one of my younger constituents, for I think they are noteworthy for their insight, their honesty and their prescience.

Stephanie Kaplan, who lives in Highland Park, IL, is a junior at Highland Park High School. Stephanie recently submitted her writing to the Jewish Press in Omaha, NE, in response to their request for essays about patriotism. Out of all the responses that arrived at the newspaper, the editors deemed Stephanie's the best among them.

Perhaps most remarkable is that this essay, in which Stephanie explains what life as an American means to her, was written in August, before Osama bin Laden became a household name and when the top news stories did not mention Afghanistan.

Our enemies have attacked us for who we are and what we believe. The very freedoms we love inspire their hatred. As our freedoms are the source of this conflict, we cannot allow them to become its casualties.

Stephanie's writing is a timely reminder of what it is we value and what it is we are defending.

Her essay follows:

WHAT BEING AN AMERICAN MEANS TO ME
(by Stephanie Kaplan)

Ice cream for dinner. Sitting on the bleachers through a muggy afternoon, cheering

heartily for a favored team or player. An early-morning walk, as the trees that line the street wave their green leaves in the wind, scintillating drops of dew falling down to join their brethren on the glistening grass. Air conditioning with the twist of a knob.

This is America!

But luxuries, the majority of which can be purchased by money, do not define what being an American means to me.

Freedom. Yes, there are rules and regulations, a moral code, and systems of punishment for those who infringe and sever them. They are in place to protect the people, however, and are not oppressing as some governments, which implement so many restrictions that the citizens are suffocated by the layers upon layers of laws.

I can keep my lights on through the night, if I so wish. No policies prohibit me from befriending a Jew, a Muslim, or a person of color. And only my own predilections will rule my summer afternoon activities, be it in-line pick-up hockey on the basketball court down the street, or a lazy afternoon perched before my computer, like a dog passing away the hours chewing on rawhide.

Being a United States resident, to me, translates into the simple joy that I can ride my bike to the places that defined my carefree youth, mainly the elementary school's playground. And if I so wish, I'll stray from the paved trail and take the long route, or cut across the grass.

Most importantly, I possess no fear when being out alone. For I feel safe, in this country, that I will not be a victim of hostility based on any outward appearance. And I'd never really noticed how wonderful and rare that is until I spent three weeks on a teen tour with students from 21 different countries.

My best friend became a girl from Hong Kong, and, as we were walking along one overcast afternoon, she stated, "I hate the Beijing government." Then, she added, "If I said that in Hong Kong, in a casual conversation, I might be okay. But if I was in Beijing, I could get shot. That's why I like America, it's free for opinions."

Never experiencing any sort of political oppression, it's difficult for me to grasp what she must feel, or the fear of a simple slip translating into death.

And this country is not perfect.

But as the anthem states, this is "... the land of the free." Sovereignty is a daily part of life. What may have seemed like a burden—all the decisions one must make, and the consequences that can only be blamed on an individual—now seems liberating.

Existing in America means much to me, but the most poignant example is that I can pray, out loud, in Hebrew, with the shades drawn up and the door gaping, invitingly open.

On the trip, while occupying a dorm room, I prayed every morning, just as I do at home. The glaring difference was that the people who passed by my open doorway were not all Jewish. Openly, I expressed my faith and reinforced my beliefs to myself, my dedication to the Hashem.

How far we've traveled, in place, time, and pure progression, since my grandmother hid below ground in Germany, with but one dress, and could not even talk, let alone pray aloud, for fear of SS men. And the advances since my grandfather fought for survival in the same foreign country, with outlandish limitations, are miraculous.

Could, I wonder, either of them imagined a time in which their granddaughter—yes, a

family!—could be so audacious as to flaunt her prayer?

It's not the passing of years, though, but the changing of countries that made it possible.

America may never be able to be defined, as being American means so many different things to millions of unique people. For the country, when drawn, should not be its traditional shape, as seen on a map, but as a 3-D shape, with as many angles as it has citizens, for the people shape America as much as the land.

Being an American means choices, luxuries, decisions, freedoms, and a feeling of not importance, but responsibility, in illustrating the greatness of my country, and endeavoring to uphold the lofty ideals of the founders of this Nation, inhabitants who, like my grandparents, escaped tyranny and a role of inferiority to pull freedom to their chests and keep it there, chained 'til a death that does not come prematurely due to discrimination.

Being an American means I am an individual and have the independence to be just that—an American, because I believe in the country and the opportunity. While it may take a little digging, opportunity is available; even if found, one must clean off the dirt before pursuing it.

I am a living, breathing, original American, and that I can exist unscathed is what being a citizen of this realm is all about. Existing as a member of this free country means, to me, that if in 60 years my family can go from savoring every drop of water to survive to having a house with a mezuzah on each doorway, I can savor the prospects presented by freedom and find a way to take it a step farther.

After all, my door is always open.●

TRIBUTE TO MARY KAY ASH

• Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Mary Kay Ash.

On November 22, 2001, America and Texas lost a great person Mary Kay Ash.

Throughout Mary Kay Ash's life, her unswerving devotion to principles and to doing what is right enabled her to exert an influence unique in a society that was known for strict rules of hierarchy, specifically male hierarchy. She flourished where many fail, or simply remain in the shadows of obscurity. By doing so, she blazed the path for many women after her, we have all profited from her success.

Over her career, Mary Kay sacrificed a lot to fulfill her dream, do her duty to her family and her God, and to stand by her principles. It is women and men of that caliber who have made our country great.

Her savvy created an incredible business from a profit point of view, but, most important, she created a business that offers women the chance for personal and professional fulfillment and success. It is no wonder that Mary Kay Cosmetics is considered by Fortune Magazine as one of the top ten best companies for women, indeed, it is also recognized as one of The 100 Best Companies to Work for in America.

But Mary Kay never stopped with work, she did not even start with work.